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GEORGE BUSH

Note: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 27.

Exchange With Reporters in San Antonio

February 27, 1992

North American Free Trade Agreement

Q. Mr. President, did you make any breakthroughs on free trade this morning?

The President. No. We had good discussions on that with the President of Mexico. And we just reassured him that we want an agreement, a good agreement as soon as possible. No politics, no nothing is going to stand in the way of our doing what is right and what is best for the American peo-

ple. And what's best is to get a fair trade—free trade agreement through as soon as possible.

Q. Do you think there will be one this year, Mr. President?

The President. Well, we're hoping so, yes.

Note: The exchange began at 8:42 a.m. at the Marriott Rivercenter Hotel. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Text of Remarks at the Opening Session of the Drug Summit in San Antonio

February 27, 1992

It is a great honor and pleasure to call to order an historic meeting, in a historic city, in a historic State, my home State of Texas. We are all here to make this San Antonio drug summit as successful as the first summit called by President Barco 2 years ago in beautiful, heroic Cartagena. It is fitting to begin this meeting with a warm tribute to the great, visionary man who first brought us together on this issue, Virgilio Barco.

In Cartagena, as President Paz Zamora, who is also here today, will recall, we faced a daunting, unprecedented, some thought hopeless challenge: How to unite against the scourge of drugs, violence, and corruption that was undermining our democratic societies, our institutions, our economies, and our environment.

That meeting gave birth to a new alliance to strengthen our democracies by attacking the drug trafficking and consumption with greater resolve than ever before. Cartagena was when we stopped the finger-pointing

and committed ourselves to cooperation, when we recognized that drugs are an international plague caused by both consumer and supplier.

Two years later the situation has markedly improved. We are facing the challenge. We are united. We are resolute. We are prevailing. We are now seven, not four. We welcome to this group Mexico, Venezuela, and Ecuador, all of whom have shown firm leadership and courage in this struggle. Others in the Americas and Europe are with us, seeing the threat more clearly. Progress is being made. We have courageously faced those who would subvert our societies, break our laws, and kill thousands of innocents. Top traffickers are dead or jailed. Record levels of cocaine and other drugs have been seized. Cultivation has leveled off. Interdiction is up worldwide. We have cracked down on drug users. Consumption is declining as our people increas-

ingly reject drugs, especially our youth. Our judicial institutions are stronger, better able to meet the challenge. Our efforts against money laundering, chemical diversion, and illegal arms exports are improving.

But we are here today because the job is not yet done. We have not yet won this fight. It is time to assess our accomplishments and our plans, to learn from the past and look to the future. Let me mention what seems to me to be some priority areas.

First and foremost, we must reduce demand. All else will fail if we do not do that. I know that task falls heaviest on the United States, and we have made a good beginning. Since I came to office, there has been a 35-percent decrease in current cocaine users, and 27 percent fewer young people are using drugs.

Second, we must continue the economic reform, economic assistance, debt, trade, and investment measures which are so important to our antinarcotics programs. The United States wants alternative development to succeed. I am sure Peruvian and Bolivian peasants will stop growing illegal coca if there is an alternative besides starvation. The stick of law enforcement must have a carrot, an offer of viable economic alternatives for poor peasants.

Third, we must continue and enhance our effectiveness in eradication, interdiction, and law enforcement that have been so critical to our success thus far. Just as demand reduction will lower supply, so also supply reduction will lessen demand. We have laid this out in the "Strategy for Action" that is part of our declaration. We must make it happen.

Fourth, we must look carefully and imaginatively at what might be called nonviolent law enforcement measures. We must strengthen and harmonize our laws on money laundering, arms, exports, chemical controls, asset seizure, and in other areas. It is here that the long arm of the law can fracture the power of the traffickers. The antiracketeering laws in the United States have proven to be one of the strongest measures we have developed in recent years.

Fifth, our judicial systems need our attention. Many of us have underway legal reforms so that we can handle criminal cases

faster, more securely, and more effectively. These are important and should proceed. We must also cooperate by sharing information about traffickers and their crimes so they can be brought to justice.

Sixth, our cooperation has developed in the past 2 years, and I welcome that. We need to keep in close touch so that we can coordinate strategy and understand each others' perspectives and needs. That makes the high-level follow-on meeting very important. It will be the first review of how our "Strategies for Action" are progressing. We also must enlist the cooperation of the Europeans and Asians. To do that we should send a delegation to those countries to talk to their leaders.

Seventh, heroin production is a worrisome problem which Mexico and Colombia are moving against with some success. This is a sign the traffickers believe the cocaine trade is declining. We cannot ignore this new threat, or we risk a surprise in the future.

Eighth, we must do a better job educating our press and our publics about our progress. In the United States, for example, we are seeing a downturn in demand that was purchased at great cost in money and effort. Another example is the story of the drop in cultivation in the Chapare in Bolivia.

Ninth, as we take up the struggle within our own countries with renewed vigor, we must bear in mind that our efforts transcend borders. We must respect sovereignty, or our cooperation will not be sustained. But as sovereign states, we can agree to cooperate against the traffickers who trample on the sovereignty. If we do not work together, the traffickers will destroy us separately.

Finally, one more note of great importance. Everything we do must conform to our democratic principles. None of us wants a drug-free dictatorship. We must protect the human and civil rights of our citizens. We are all committed to defending democracy and its principles as we defeat the scourge of drugs.

Note: This text was issued by the Office of the Press Secretary. Virgilio Barco was former President of Colombia.